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Statement of AT&T Inc.
Regarding Raised House Bill No. 7152
AN ACT ACCELERATING THE DEPLOYMENT OF 5G WIRELESS FACILITIES
Before the Committee on Energy & Technology
March 5, 2019

Proposal:

Section One of the Raised Bill creates a new Council on 5G made up of key members of the administration in order to better allow for use of state property for the deployment of wireless technology. Section Two orders the Office of Policy & Management (OPM), the Public Utility Regulatory Authority (PURA) and the Connecticut Siting Council (CSC) to work with municipalities to establish a process for the use of municipal property for the deployment of wireless facilities.

Comments:

AT&T strongly supports the intent of the Raised Bill and commends Governor Lamont and the Committee for the introduction and consideration of this important legislation.

As the Committee heard earlier this session at one of its informational hearings, 5G wireless technology holds the promise of being transformative in the way in which we all live, work and play. Broadly speaking, 5G wireless networks will be up to 5 times more responsive, up to 100 times faster and allow up to 100 times more devices to be connected than today's wireless networks. These improvements will allow for innovations like autonomous vehicles, remote medicine and the use of augmented and virtual reality in the manufacturing and retail environments, to name just a few. Most importantly, 5G will serve as a building block to innovation, giving inventors and entrepreneurs tools to create and build businesses which have yet to even be conceived.

Connecticut needs to ensure that it has rules which encourage investment in 5G technology in the state, including making it easier to deploy small cells and other technology which are the foundation on which 5G networks operate.

In many respects Connecticut already has favorable rules to encourage the deployment of 5G technology. Notably, PURA's existing rules that govern the deployment of small cells on utility poles, which are part of the electric distribution system, are working. These rules require providers to consult with municipalities prior to deployment, to notify abutting property owners and give them a chance to raise objections and, when objections are raised, to require a hearing by PURA.

To the extent there are gaps in the current system today they are in two specific areas: (1) deploying facilities on state property and (2) using municipal property such as light poles and traffic signals in areas where utility poles are not present, such as in central business districts. This legislation rightly focuses on these two areas.

The proposed Council on 5G will provide the industry with a forum, or a front door, if you will, for it to propose the use of state property for a specific wireless facility. The Council and the proposed rules this legislation requires it to promulgate will provide to the industry the regulatory certainty it needs in order to invest. In addition, in allowing for the use of state property, this legislation may eliminate the need to deploy in other areas where there might be greater objection on the part of homeowners. The lack of a Council, or any overarching state rules or processes today, is serving as a hindrance to investment.

It is important to note that nothing in this legislation gives the wireless industry the right to locate any facilities on any state real property; it merely creates a process for the industry to ask. The state reserves the right to reject an application.

The consultation process among state and municipal officials called for under Section Two of the bill is, we believe, the right and necessary first step to aid in the development of streamlined rules for deployment of wireless facilities on municipal property. It has been our experience that deploying on municipal property is today a cumbersome and time-consuming process which serves as a real block to the deployment of next-generation wireless services in the state. By bringing all of the relevant parties together, this legislation will aid in eliminating these roadblocks and will benefit the state, its cities and towns, and most importantly the people of Connecticut.

AT&T has already undertaken discussions with the state and its various agencies on clarifying language in some parts of the legislation and we look forward to continuing that work with them and with the members of the Committee.

Conclusion:

AT&T strongly supports Raised House Bill No. 7152 because it will aid in the deployment of necessary wireless technology and we urge its favorable consideration by the Committee.